

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Committee to Examine **National Guard Responsibilities & Readiness**

Is the Guard Equipped to Meet Its Ever-Expanding Role?

Committee to Release New GAO Report

What: Government Reform Committee Oversight Hearing:
“The Critical Role of the National Guard at Home and Abroad”

When: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2005 at 10:00 A.M.

Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Background:

While it is clear Army and Air National Guard personnel are making significant contributions to the nation’s security, it is less certain that they will continue to be resourced and equipped to fulfill their massive federal responsibilities, as well as the expressed needs of the states. This hearing will examine the current National Guard equipment situation and how Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of the Army transformation policies affect the Guard’s level of readiness to meet overseas and homeland missions. This hearing is part of the Committee’s continuing investigation into Department of Defense’s policies and reforms affecting the National Guard. Previous hearings and oversight work into the National Guard have uncovered serious pay process problems and massive administrative chaos in medical holding companies, and led to the creation of new Title 32 authorities.

The modern National Guard is a highly diverse, highly taxed, and critically essential operational force. Today, members of the Army National Guard fight side by side with regular armed forces members in combat throughout the world. As of July 2005, nearly one-third of all the soldiers serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom were Army National Guard troops.

The National Guard also plays a critical role at home assisting civilian authorities with homeland security and natural disasters. Homeland National Guard responsibilities include: security at airports, borders, critical infrastructure sites and special events; fire-fighting; counter-drug operations; missile defense missions; and monitoring the airspace of the continental United States. The Guard also continues to be the “state militia of old,” providing military assistance at the request of civilian authorities. As seen on TV, National Guard troops played a key role in the response to Hurricane Katrina.

To meet the overseas demand for equipment, the Army has required Army National Guard units to leave behind many items for use by succeeding forces, but the Army can only account for about 45 percent of these items and has not developed a plan to replace them, as DOD policy requires. Army Guard units at home face growing equipment shortages and challenges in regaining readiness for future missions.

We are essentially robbing the non-deployed Peter to pay the deployed Paul. While prioritization is understandable, we cannot expect the citizen soldiers of the National Guard to continue working successfully under continuous overseas mobilizations, uninitiated federal operational plans for homeland defense, current disaster response and relief missions at home, and unclear funding for equipment.

Witnesses:

Panel I:

The Honorable Edward Rendell, Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne, Governor, State of Idaho

Panel II

The Honorable David Walker, Comptroller General of the United States, accompanied by Janet A. St. Laurent, Director, Defense Capabilities and Management, Government Accountability Office

The Honorable Thomas F. Hall, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs
United States Department of Defense

Lieutenant General Davis F. Melcher, Deputy Chief of Staff, United States Army

Lieutenant General H Steven Blum, Chief, National Guard Bureau

Major General Allen Tackett, State Adjutant General of West Virginia

Major General Raymond Rees, State Adjutant General of Oregon

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